

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at the Residence of Member of Parliament and National League for Democracy Party Leader Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma in Rangoon, Burma
November 19, 2012

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi. I would like to say how happy I am to receive President Obama in my country and in my house. The friendship between our two countries is of long standing. The United States has been staunch in its support of the democracy movement in Burma, and we are confident that this support will continue through the difficult years that lie ahead. I say difficult because the most difficult time in any transition is when we think that success is in sight. Then we have to be very careful that we are not lured by a mirage of success and that we are working towards genuine success for our people and for the friendship between our two countries.

I believe that we have been able to discuss our various concerns openly and that as a result of the President's visit to this country, the relations between our countries can only progress in the right direction.

I intend fully to keep in touch with the United States Government as far as possible and to make sure that we always liaise one another on the most important matters.

Now, I'm told I had 3 minutes, and I think this is about 3 minutes. So thank you all for coming. And I leave the floor to President Obama.

President Obama. Well, I'll try to be pretty brief, although not as eloquent. I was honored to be the first President to welcome *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi* to the White House. I'm proud to be the first American President to visit this spectacular country, and I am very pleased that one of my first stops is to visit with an icon of democracy who's inspired so many people, not just in this country, but all around the world.

I especially want to thank Aung San Suu Kyi for welcoming me to her home. Here, through so many difficult years, is where she displayed such unbreakable courage and determination. It's here where she showed that human freedom and dignity cannot be denied.

Today marks the next step in a new chapter between the United States and Burma. Last year, in response to early flickers of reform, I asked Secretary Clinton to visit this country and explore with Aung San Suu Kyi and the Government whether the United States could empower reform efforts and begin a new relationship between our peoples.

In the year since, we've seen some very encouraging progress, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release and election to Parliament, the release of political prisoners, the lifting of restrictions on the press, and new laws to expand labor rights and eliminate the use of child soldiers. And at my direction, the United States has responded to support these reforms, including the easing of sanctions.

Now, as a former legislator myself, I followed your role in the new Parliament with interest and admiration. Real democracy involves having different branches of government check and balance each other, and I applaud your efforts in that regard, particularly as the head of the Committee of the Rule of Law.

In my discussions here in Yangon, our goal is to sustain the momentum for democratization. That includes building credible government institutions, establishing rule of

law, ending ethnic conflicts, and ensuring that the people of this country have access to greater education, health care, and economic opportunity.

And I want to make a pledge to the people of this country that I am confident we can keep, and that is, if we see continued progress towards reform, our bilateral ties will grow stronger and we will do everything we can to help ensure success.

I'm so happy, by the way, to be joined by Secretary Clinton. This is her last foreign trip that we're going to take together, and it is fitting that we have come here to a country that she has done so much to support.

Where did Hillary go? Where is she?

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Oh, I'm right here.

President Obama. There she is.

So I could not be more grateful, not only for your service, Hillary, but also for the powerful message that you and Aung San Suu Kyi send about the importance of women and men everywhere embracing and promoting democratic values and human rights.

So again, I want to thank you, *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*, for your extraordinary hospitality and grace; the power of your example, which has been an inspiration to people all around the world, including myself. Clearly, you will be playing a key role in your country's future for many years to come as Burma seeks the freedom and the prosperity and the dignity that not only the people of this country deserve, but people all around the world deserve.

So thank you for your inspiring message.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Burma :: Member of Parliament Aung San Suu Kyi.

Locations: Rangoon, Burma.

Names: Aung San Suu Kyi; Clinton, Hillary Rodham.

Subjects: Burma : Democracy efforts; Burma : Economic growth and development; Burma : Human rights issues; Burma : President Obama's visit; Burma : Relations with U.S.; Burma : U.S. sanctions; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; State, Department of : Secretary.

DCPD Number: DCPD201200896.